

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-23 are presently active in this case. Claims 18-22 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 13, and 16 are amended, and Claim 23 is added by the present amendment. Support for the amendments to Claims 2 and 9 can be found at least at page 2, lines 18-25 of the specification. Applicants note that Claims 4-6, 13, and 16 are amended only to correct minor informalities.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-4, 7-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Takamori, et al. (U.S. Pub. No. 2002/0025375, herein "Takamori"). For the reasons discussed below, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the anticipation rejection based on Takamori.

Amended Claim 1 is directed to a coating and developing apparatus including an interface section for transferring a resist-coated substrate, where the interface section having *an airtight structure and located between a processor and an exposing apparatus*. Further, Claim 1 recites that a temperature adjustor and a transfer mechanism are housed in the airtight structure. Amended Claim 7 recites a coating and developing apparatus including an interface section having *an airtight structure and located between a processor and an exposing apparatus*. Claim 7 further recites that a first transfer mechanism, a second transfer mechanism, and a shelf section are housed in the airtight structure. Support for the amendments to Claims 1 and 7 can be found at least at FIGs. 3 and 7, and at page 11, lines 25-28 of the specification. Thus, no new matter is added.

In a non-limiting exemplary embodiment, FIG. 3 illustrates an interface section S2 between a processing section S1 and an exposing apparatus 200 with an airtight structure S2

(see specification at page 11, lines 25-36). As shown in FIG. 7, the airtight structure of the interface section S2 includes a peripheral exposing apparatus 65 to remove the resist applied on the periphery outside a circuit-forming area of a wafer W. As described at page 2, lines 18-21, this action may cause an increase of wafer temperature. Also within the airtight structure of the interface section S2 are temperature adjustment units 61 for adjusting the temperature of a wafer W to a temperature suitable for exposing processing before transfer to the exposing apparatus 200 (see specification at page 14, lines 8-13). The temperature adjuster 61 adjusts the temperature of the substrate, for example, to cool it to a temperature suitable for exposing processing at the exposing apparatus 200 (see specification at page 13, lines 20-27). FIG. 7 also shows a shelf section U4, a first transfer mechanism 4, and a second transfer mechanism 5 housed in the airtight structure of the interface section S2. By providing an interface section as claimed, Applicants respectfully submit that a temperature change of the substrate during transfer to the exposing apparatus can be decreased.

Takamori describes a resist coating apparatus with a baking unit 20, a cooling unit 21, and a coating/peripheral resist portion removing unit 24 mounted on a second processing section 5 (see FIGs. 1 and 3, and paragraphs [0058], [0061], and [0065]). As described at paragraph [0062], the processing units 20, 21, 24 are arranged side-by side along both sides of a central transportation path 23 of the second processing section 5. Takamori does not teach or suggest that the path 23 separating the processing units is airtight. On the contrary, FIG. 1 shows that the path 23 is open along at least the top surface. Additionally, the interface section 7 of Takamori is also not described or suggested to have an airtight structure (for example, see FIGs. 1 and 3).

Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that the second processing section 5 of Takamori is not patentably the same as the interface section having an airtight structure

recited in Applicants' amended Claims 1 and 7. The Office Action at page 3, lines 13-16, notes that the chuck heater H1 of Takamori describes Applicants' claimed temperature controlling unit. However, the chuck heater H1 and baking unit 21 of Takamori are housed in the coating unit 30 of the second processing section 5 and not the interface section 7 between the second processing section 5 and the light-exposure apparatus 6. As a result, Applicants submit that the substrate may undergo a harmful temperature change while being transferred to the light-exposure apparatus 6. Similarly, Applicants note that the shelf section described in Takamori at paragraphs [0058] and [0059] is located in the processing sections 3, 5, and not the interface section 7. Additionally, the deliver table 27, second sub-transferring arm 26, first main transfer arm 15, and second main transferring arm 22 are not housed in an airtight structure. Thus, Takamori does not teach at least an interface section having an airtight structure, where the airtight structure houses a temperature adjustor, a first or second transfer mechanism, or a shelf section. Therefore, Takamori does not teach or suggest all limitations of Applicants' amended Claim 1 or Claim 7.

Dependent Claims 2-4 and 8-15 are considered allowable for the reasons advanced for amended Claims 1 and 7 from which they depend. These claims are further considered allowable as they recite other features of the invention that are not disclosed, taught, or suggested by the applied references when those features are considered within the context of base Claims 1 and 7.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1-4, and 7-15 using Takamori.

Also in the outstanding Office Action, Claims 4-6, 16, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Takamori in view of Shiraishi, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,939,130, herein "Shiraishi"). For the reasons discussed below, Applicants respectfully

request the withdrawal of the obviousness rejection.

Claims 4-6, 16, and 17 are considered allowable for the reasons advanced for amended Claims 1 and 7 from which they depend. These claims are further considered allowable as they recite other features of the invention that are not disclosed, taught, or suggested by the applied references when those features are considered within the context of base Claims 1 and 7.

Furthermore, Shiraishi does not teach or suggest at least an interface structure having an airtight structure that houses a temperature adjustor, a transfer mechanism, or a shelf unit. For example, in the case of Shiraishi, FIG. 3 shows a wafer temperature adjusting unit 15 and a first main arm mechanism 21 housed outside of resist coating station 45. Moreover, the described structures are not housed in an airtight structure of either the first interface section 50 or second interface section 50A (see FIG. 2). Therefore, Shiraishi does not remedy the previously noted deficiencies of Takamori.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 4-6, 16, and 17 based on Takamori in view of Shiraishi.

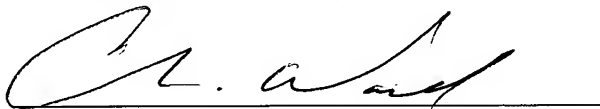
Newly added Claim 23 is considered allowable as it recites features of the invention that are neither disclosed nor suggested by the references of record. In a non-limiting exemplary embodiment, FIG. 7 shows an interface section having an airtight structure housing a temperature adjuster 61, a peripheral exposing apparatus 65, and a transfer mechanism 4. As discussed above, neither Takamori nor Shiraishi teach or suggest at least an interface section having an airtight structure that houses a temperature adjuster, an exposing apparatus, or a transfer mechanism therein.

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Reply to Office Action of February 3, 2004

Consequently, in view of the above discussion, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for formal allowance, and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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